

## 10. AGRICULTURAL and FOREST RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

An understanding of a town's agricultural and forest resources is important for several reasons. Farm and forest-based activities contribute to the economy. They are an important component of rural character. Proper management of farm and forestland reduces the risk of stormwater runoff and other sources of water pollution.

**State Goal:** To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development, which threatens those resources.

### OVERVIEW & HIGHLIGHTS

Farming is not a major land use in Bucksport with about 6% of the land area devoted to cultivation and pasture. There are some small commercial operations and some hobby farms. Interest in purchasing locally grown food is illustrated by the success of the Bucksport Farmer's Market. There is local interest in establishing a "Food Hub" in Bucksport to help develop production and markets.

Forestry is much more significant in terms of acreage with about 80% of the town in woodland, including forested wetlands. About 23 percent of the forest land in Bucksport is dedicated to commercial management. Smaller woodlots account for a large portion of the undeveloped acreage in the rural parts of town. About 18 percent of the town's land area is held in the tree growth tax classification. The Paper Mill used to be a large purchaser of local pulp wood. Verso Paper, LLC still trucks some tree-length logs to its mill in Jay from the log yard it owns off River Road in Bucksport. The volume, however, is only a small fraction of what the mill once bought from local woodlot managers.



Changing markets are a challenge for woodlot managers

## ANALYSES, CONDITIONS, AND TRENDS

The town participates in the Maine Farm and Open Space Program that gives tax breaks to productive farms over 5 contiguous acres. To be eligible for this classification a parcel must yield at least \$2,000 in farm income a year. In 1999 there were 358 acres held in farmland current use taxation. The acreage held in this category has fluctuated in recent years, landing at 444 acres in 2015. The current use program taxes farmland for its value for farming rather than its potential value as developed land. Farm acres in locations that would be more valuable for other kinds of development (adjacent to public ways or waterfront, etc.) provide a tax incentive for enrollment. Back land in Bucksport tends to be taxed similarly within or without the Program.

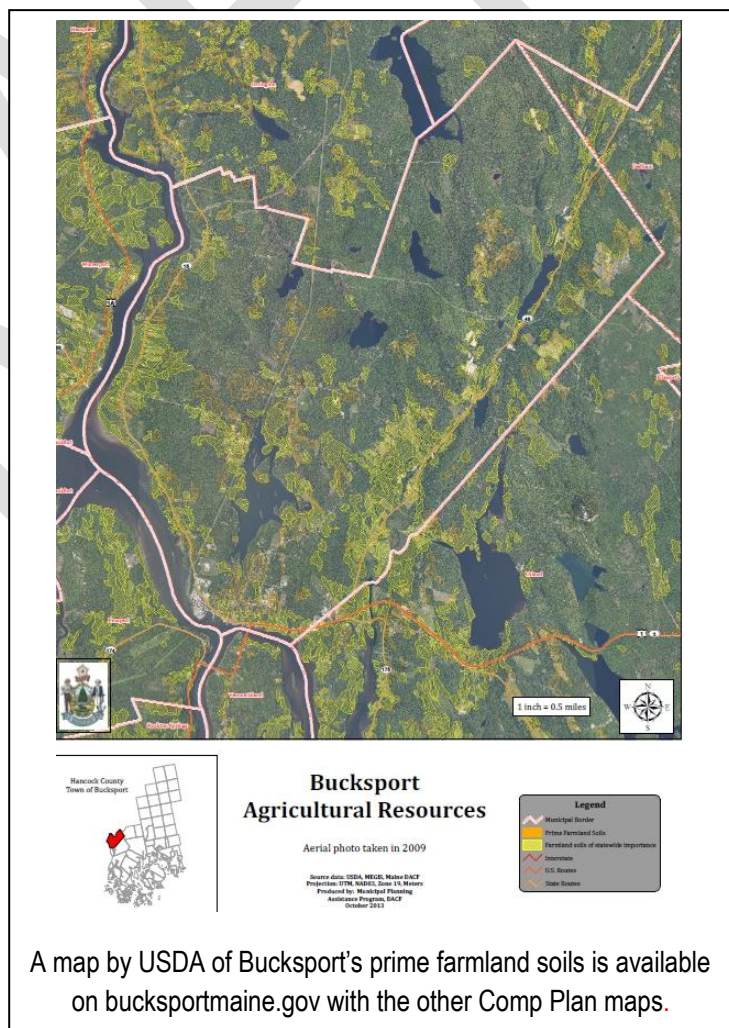
*How important is agriculture and/or forestry and are these activities growing, stable, or declining?*

*Is the community currently taking regulatory and/or non-regulatory steps to protect productive farming and forestry lands?*

While not all active farmland is necessarily enrolled in the current use program, these data indicate that farming accounts for a small portion of the total land area. The 323 acres is just under one percent of the 34,699 acres of land in Bucksport. The land cover analysis presented in Table XII.5 of the Existing Land Use chapter indicates that there are 1,149 acres of cultivated crops (mostly blueberries) and 1,055 acres of pasture or hay fields. Local farming operations include a pick-your-own orchard and a strawberry farm. There is also a Christmas Tree farm and some limited raising of livestock such as beef cattle and pigs. While these operations are small, they do provide important sources of locally grown food.

Prime agricultural soils account for 2,437 acres or about 7 percent of the total land area. These are soils rated by the Natural Resource Conservation Services as having the best potential for farming. This classification does not necessarily mean that the soils are actually farmed.

There has been a minor decrease in the land held in tree growth taxation, which offers owners of forest land tax breaks comparable to those offered farmers in the



current use taxation. In 1999 7,282 acres were held in tree growth contrasted with 6,236 acres in 2012, a decrease of about 14 percent. This acreage compares to 6,259 in 2009, 6,203 in 2010, and 6,208 in 2011. As of 2015, 6,584 acres, about 19 percent of the town's land area, was held in tree growth. The land cover analysis in Chapter 12 shows a total of 26,828 acres of forest land. This is about 78 percent of the total town area. About 23 percent (6,208 acres) of the forested areas are held in tree growth. There are 9,287 acres of deciduous forest, 5,899 acres of evergreen, and 9,095 acres of mixed forest. Commercial timber harvesting trends are shown in Table 10.1. These data are based on reports filed with the Maine Forest Service. The largest amount of timber harvested in a given year was 1,316 acres in 2004 and the smallest was 447 acres in 2009. While forestry is an important part of the economy, these harvests are relatively small-scale when compared to some other parts of Maine.

<b>Table 10.1 Reported Timber Harvests, Bucksport 2001 -2011</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Harvested Acres</b>	<b>Change of Land Use Acres</b>	<b>Number of active notifications</b>
2001	560	0	44
2002	890	15	41
2003	632	25	38
2004	1,316	55	49
2005	652	40	46
2006	634	44	40
2007	595	67	33
2008	267	41	28
2009	447	49	33
2010	669	48	53
2011	959	33	60
<b>SOURCE:</b> Maine Forest Service Year-End Landowner Reports			

Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust owns two properties totaling 96 acres in Bucksport with conserved woodlands. A six-acre blueberry field on one piece is currently being managed traditionally, but may converted to organic in the near future. Sociosilv, LLC is a woodlot management company with ties to the University of Maine. They seek to grow and harvest trees in a responsible fashion with public access where appropriate. Sociosilv owns two properties in Bucksport with a total of 100 acres of woodland and is seeking to buy a town owned parcel as described below.

*Are there local or regional land trusts actively working to protect farms or forest lands in the community?*

As reported in section X.4.1 just under one percent of the land in town is held in the farmland. About 18 percent of the town's land area is in tree growth. The qualification standards for enrollment and penalties for withdrawal may discourage landowner participation.

*Are farm and forest land owners taking advantage of the state's current use tax laws?*



Harvesting of forested areas using modern methods creates noise that is often heard by nearby residents. Currently, such unwanted noise is only regulated by “public nuisance” provisions of local ordinances. Potential damage to public roadways from logging trucks is discouraged through posted weight limits and potential fines. Private ways are protected by the actions of road associations, land owners and civil courts.

*Has proximity of new homes or other incompatible uses affected the normal farming and logging operations?*

As described more fully in Chapter 6, Bucksport owns several larger tracts of land that are primarily dedicated to recreation. Furthermore, the Forest Management Plan written for the town by Licensed Forester Jake Maier, states the “Long-Term Objective” is “to convert the forested part of both parcels to a multiple use forest where aesthetically pleasing recreation and wildlife management have high priority, and where stumpage income from periodic thinning can make the management self-sufficient...” A copy of the Plan is stored in the town assessor’s office. The Miles Lane and Silver Lake walking trail areas contain over 200 acres of field and forest with lake shore access and a budding arboretum. The town also owns 12.5 acres on Orcutt Mountain with unknown access. Sociosilv, LLC has offered to purchase and manage this lot with a public trail to Bucksport’s highest summit.

*Does the community have town or public woodlands under management, or that would benefit from forest management?*

Bucksport’s forest land has seen as much consolidation of ownership as it has division in recent years. The expansion of Heritage Park, potentially converting forty acres of forest to light industrial use is the largest new development of agriculture/woodland on the horizon.

*Are there large tracts of agricultural or industrial forest land that have been or may be sold for development in the foreseeable future? If so, what impact would this have on the community?*

The Bucksport Bay Farmers market operates during the warmer months on a regular, posted schedule. Its location has changed several times to take advantage of visibility and parking availability. It is supported by area farmers, the Bucksport Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, Healthy Acadia, the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets and the Downeast Business Alliance. Farmers, producers of meat, poultry and dairy, fishermen, and makers of value-added items such as baked goods and preserves and craftsmen are eligible to participate. A previous effort to start a community garden was not successful. Some local restaurants buy produce from area farmers.

*Does the community support community forestry or agriculture (i.e. small woodlots, community forests, tree farms, community gardens, farmers’ markets, or community-supported agriculture)? If so, how?*



Pick-your-own fruit farms in Bucksport provide farmers with income, popular family activities and fresh, local food.